

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ADANA 000127

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [ADANA](#)

SUBJECT: JANDARMA EVICTS VILLAGE GUARDS FROM SYRIAC VILLAGE OF SARIKOY

REF: ADANA 00105

1. (SBU) Summary: A Syriac Orthodox Church representative told poloff that on September 12, security forces evicted the Kurdish village guards that had been living in the village of Sarikoy in Sirnak Province (reftel). Members of the Syriac community who had resided in Sarikoy prior to 1994, and who had recently returned from Europe in order to resettle in there, will consult with Sirnak government officials on security and other matters before returning to the now emptied village. The Sirnak Governor's interest in this case, and ultimately strong action by his office in concert with security forces, represents the most affirmative official government response in favor of the Syriac community in the Southeast to date. End summary.

2. (SBU) In reftel, post reported on Sarikoy, a village in Sirnak province that had been inhabited by members of the Syriac Christian community until 1994, when they left, fleeing violence in the region. Twenty Kurdish village guards assigned to work in the region subsequently inhabited the village, along with family members. When Syriac community members returned from Europe this year to find their resettlement in Sarikoy blocked by the presence of the village guards, they addressed their claims to the Governor of Sirnak. Five representatives of the community have been staying at the Syriac Orthodox Church's Dayrul Umur Monastery in Midyat while pursuing what observers had initially hoped would be an amicable agreement allowing them to return to their village.

3. (SBU) In a September 1 meeting at the monastery, representatives of the Church told poloff that the Sirnak Governor had that very day cut electricity services to Sarikoy in an effort to dissuade the village's current occupants from staying there. Church representatives also told us that in the week leading up to this development, they had received a visit from an Anatolian Agency wire service reporter who had visited the Governor's office a short time earlier. The reporter said that the Governor's desk had been covered with documents related to Sarikoy and that the Governor spoke of the importance he placed on resolving the case.

4. (SBU) In a September 16 phone conversation, a Syriac church official based at the Monastery in Midyat confirmed press reports that the Jandarma had "evacuated" the village guards from the village on September 12, thus paving the way for the Syriac community's return. The Jandarma were very clever, he said, in the way they launched their "operation." He stated that approximately three weeks earlier, the Jandarma had given notice to Sarikoy's current residents of its intent to evict them, including the date the eviction would be carried out. When the Jandarma discovered that the guards had gathered media representatives to observe the process, they abandoned the date, and planned the September 12 operation. According to our contact in Midyat, the Jandarma called the guards from Sarikoy to the Jandarma post around 8:30 pm on September 12, informed them that Jandarma officers were needed at an operation elsewhere in the region, and asked the guards to occupy the post while they were gone. When the guards were inside the post, Jandarma allegedly disarmed them, and prevented their return to Sarikoy. The Jandarma were reportedly planning to empty Sarikoy houses of the guards' possessions September 18-19.

5. (SBU) For the moment the representatives of the Syriac community have stayed put at the Monastery, as they are concerned about security in the village. They will communicate with the Governor and Deputy Governor of Sirnak as they contemplate their return.

6. (SBU) Comment: Sarikoy is not the only place where the presence of Kurdish village guards has proved an obstacle to returns for displaced persons. Lawyers at the Diyarbakir Bar Association told poloff they had been following this case, and like the Syriac community members, were somewhat surprised about the attention it was receiving from government officials. Other village returns (to majority Kurdish villages, for example) will be considerably more politically charged, and we should not expect the Jandarma action in Sarikoy to be a precedent. It is noteworthy, however, as the village return issue comes under increasing scrutiny by the European Union. End comment.

ALLISON